



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii **2** 3 4 5

Skateboarders at School

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This class had been exploring written arguments for two weeks. They identified the structure – thesis statement, supporting reasons, concluding statement restating the thesis. They also explored language features such as emotive language, rhetorical questions, facts, and quotations. Students had been able to practise constructing a written argument on teacher-directed topics.

They were then asked to choose a topic that they felt strongly about, from the list of recorded suggestions. Their task was to write an argument to send to an authority that might be able to make change. Luke chose the skateboarding issue and forwarded his published copy to the school principal.

The whole class was involved in discussion prior to writing. Students identified problems associated with skateboarding, and exchanged ideas and opinions on whether it should be allowed at school. Before writing, they were reminded of the structure of an argument: an opening statement of their position, some supporting reasons, and a conclusion supporting their opinion.

Teacher-student conversations

Luke felt strongly that skateboarders should be allowed to use the school, and drafted his argument independently. The teacher conferenced with him, acknowledging that he had followed the suggested framework effectively.

Teacher: You've started with a strong introduction – I don't think anyone could argue with that fact!

Luke: There aren't any skateboard bowls around here.

Teacher: You make a good point about other sports too.

Luke: Well, that doesn't seem fair if you're into skateboarding.

Teacher: I can tell exactly how you feel from this writing. And I think you've convinced me that you're right – good arguing!

Luke edited his work before publishing.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Guided and shared reading programmes should provide opportunities for students to read and analyse a range of texts with persuasive language features. These could include:

- emotive language
- rhetorical questions
- pronouns denoting inclusion or exclusion
- appealing to authority
- use of the imperative.

Such texts can be found in newspapers, magazines, and *School Journal* articles, and should appeal to the young age group. They might be on topics selected by the students, such as skateboarding.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Luke towards the next learning step, the teacher might help him to focus on:

Ideas

- developing more significant detail and elaboration that support arguments.

Structure

- beginning to organise ideas into paragraphs.

Language features

- beginning to research and add authority with facts or expert opinions.

The teacher could nurture these skills in a rich language environment, where reading and writing are supported by discussion. Specific skills will be taught in the reading and writing programmes, especially in feedback sessions. In the guided and shared reading programmes, persuasive language features will be taught. The teacher should also help the student with information retrieval and analysis.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 2: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write instructions and explanations, state facts and opinions, and recount events in a range of authentic contexts.

Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text which affect understanding.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge and experience.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36

REFERENCE

Ministry of Education. (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii **2** 3 4 5

Skateboarders at School

WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: This writer, Luke, is aware of his audience and writes directly to them. He appeals to their sense of fairness, and presents his reasons in sound logical order.

Student's first draft

Deeper features

Ideas

States main idea clearly.

Gives supporting evidence; suggests a solution.

Structure

Sequences ideas logically.

Sentences

Varies sentence beginnings.

Attempts complex sentences

Vocabulary

Uses appropriate, topic-related vocabulary.

Language features

Uses some emotive terms.

Uses rhetorical question.

Presents prior knowledge with authority.

Thursday 14 June
 SKateboarders at School

I think skate boarders
 should be able allowed to
 come to school in the weekend
 to do skateboarding because
 there are is hardly any skate
 board bowls around. Schools could
 build skate board bowls or have
 skateboard lessons. All other
 sports have areas to play so
 why cant skateboarders? In my
 OPINION People aren't being fair
 on skate boarders.

Skate boarders at school

I think skate boarders should be allowed to come to school in the weekend to do skateboarding because there is hardly any skate board bowls around. Schools could build skate board bowls or have skateboard lessons. All other sports have areas to play so why cant skateboarders? In my opinion people aren't being fair on skate boarders.

Surface features

Spelling

Spells most high-frequency and content words correctly.

Demonstrates good understanding of all basic sounds and patterns in written English.

Punctuation

Understands capitals, full stops, question marks.

Grammar

Uses most grammatical conventions correctly.

Explores verb agreements.



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii **2** 3 4 5

Skateboarders at School

Student's first draft

Thursday 14 June
Skateboarders at School

I think skateboarders

should be able allowed to
come to school in the weekend
to do skateboarding because
there ~~are~~ is hardly any skate
board bowls around. Schools could
build skate board bowls or have
skateboard lessons. All other
sports have ^{areas} areas to play so
why cant skateboarders? In my
opinion people aren't being fair
on skateboarders.